

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maureen Hamer
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is an independent residential home that meets the needs of pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties between the ages of nine to 18 years. It operates as part of a group of children's homes and is also part of an education service provider. It provides accommodation for young people who attend the local associated residential special school.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **adequate**.

The core staff group promote young people's safety and well-being. Young people show improvements in their communication skills and is supporting an increase in independence skills. There is also a reduction in risk taking behaviours such as anti-social behaviour and smoking. The home is improving links with the young people's school and this is enabling staff to provide better support for example helping with homework. However the approach is not embedded.

The recent admission of a young person in addition to staff taking summer annual leave has led to some capacity issues. Consequently agency staff have been employed but this has led to some inconsistencies in care. Staff have also been provided with new training to improve key working, however the monitoring of young people's progress is not in place.

There is adequate supervision of young people to keep them safe. However there is some bullying behaviour in the home. Staff work with young people to reduce the bullying as incidents arise and through key working sessions. In addition there are individualised behaviour strategies however trends and patterns of negative behaviour are not systematically reviewed to inform evaluation of the quality of care.

Some staff feel that they do not receive sufficient support and supervision is not undertaken on a regular basis. However other staff members feel that staff work as a good team and that young people's behaviour is now less challenging.

The manager has acted on previous recommendations and young people's safety and privacy has improved. However, while the input of parents has been gained, the views of the placing authority and young people are lacking from quality assurance monitoring. As a result that requirement has not been met. In addition as a consequence of ineffective monitoring and evaluation of young people's records, management of the home is judged as inadequate.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
4 (2001)	review the Statement of Purpose so that it consists of all matters included in Schedule 1 particularly the process and eligibility to access therapy services to be provided for the children accommodated in the children's home and details of any specific therapeutic techniques used (Regulation 4 (Schedule 1) (2 and 26))	04/01/2013
4 (2001)	provide a copy of the home's Statement of Purpose to the HMCI (Regulation (4)(2))	04/01/2013
13 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in a children's home are provided with food which is properly prepared, wholesome and nutritious (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(ii))	29/11/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include confirmation that the person authorised by the registered provider to make the record has spoken to the child concerned and the person using the measure about the use of the measure (Regulation 17(B)(3)(h))	04/01/2013
17B (2001)	confirm that where a measure of restraint has been used on a child the volume includes the duration of the measure of restraint (17(B)(4)(a))	29/11/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed in the home receive appropriate supervision (Regulation 27(4)(a))	29/11/2012
28 (2001)	maintain for each child who is accommodated in the home a record in permanent form which is signed and dated by the author of each written entry (Regulation 28 (1)(c))	29/11/2012
34 (2001)	include in the system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 a system for consultation with children accommodated in the home and their placing authority. (Regulation 34 (3))	04/01/2013

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- enable all children to communicate their views about all aspects of their care and support (NMS 1.3)
- ensure that where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- regularly review incidents of challenging behaviour, examines trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice (NMS 3.21)
- ensure that when deciding admissions the availability of specialist services such as child and adolescent mental health service is accessible (NMS (6.9)
- ensure that children are helped by staff to achieve their educational or training goals. This particularly includes providing support, facilities and opportunities as needed. Staff work with a child's education provider to maximise each child's achievement and minimise any underachievement (NMS 8.4)
- improve the manager's regular monitoring, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies such as bullying to identify trends and patterns and to take action to address any issues raised (NMS 21.2)
- monitor each placement plan by the keyworker to ensure that requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **adequate**.

Young people have formed attachments to staff. This provides them with trusting relationships and confidence.

Some young people show significant improvement in their communication skills enabling them to let staff know how they feel. In addition this is enabling young people to develop social and independence skills such as going to the shops and purchasing goods. A social worker said: 'the young person has made good progress. His communication skills have hugely improved as well as his self-confidence. We can now start considering a foster placement.'

Young people's primary health care needs are met by good access to universal services such as being registered with the local general practitioner. This promotes good health and normalises their lives. Young people show some improvements in

their emotional well-being and a reduction in stopping risk taking behaviours such as smoking and use of illegal drugs.

All young people have good attendance at school. Links between the home and school has improved and has led to better communication about educational targets such as spellings. Some young people show a particular enthusiasm for some aspects of their school work such as art. Staff are providing some good support which is having a positive impact on young people's on-going enthusiasm. However not all young people are being provided with the same support and this is impeding their educational progress.

All young people are engaged in activities that they enjoy. Some young people are actively involved in community activities such as scouts. This is increasing opportunities for young people to develop skills and provide opportunities for young people to socialise with young people of their own age and so normalising their lives.

Young people do benefit from contact with family and friends that promote their understanding of their past. This helps to strengthen meaningful relationships and important support mechanisms that increase young people's self-confidence.

Young people are encouraged to do some cooking in the home. In addition they manage the care of their personalised bedrooms and some aspects of their laundry. This helps promote responsibility for self and respect for others. It also helps to prepare young people for the transition to adulthood.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **adequate**.

Relationships between staff and young people are adequate. Staff's summer annual leave and their attendance at essential training has led to some reduction in staffing capacity. To ensure that young people are cared for, agency staff have been employed and this has led to some inconsistencies in setting boundaries. In addition there had been a new admission. As a consequence of both of these events some staff members have expressed their concern at the increased pressure impacting negatively on the relationships between young people and at times with staff. Other staff members feel well supported and stated that the staff team are working well and that the home is now more settled and young people's behaviour is improving.

Staff complete individualised placement plans and identify short, medium and long term objectives. However the overall aims are not clear. In addition young people have individualised incentivised targets but progress against targets and objectives are not reported in writing. A social worker stated: 'the monthly keyworker reports provide good detail about what activities the young people have been doing but there is insufficient information on their progress.'

Staff do listen to and respond positively to the views of young people. House

meetings are in place and young people raise a range of issues including menu planning to enhance their sense of ownership in the home. A social worker commented: 'young people work with the keyworker and they have gone through the reward chart and what the reward might be. This makes it more meaningful.' However care plans do not show young people's involvement and are not signed by young people. Staff have very recently completed key working training. They are aware that they need to change their approach to key working and their reporting of young people's engagement and progress to demonstrate the impact of actions on young people's goals.

Staff are active in accessing specialist input to assessment young people's specialist health needs. This additional support is enabling staff to improve the support that they provide to young people. However access to local child and mental health services is not available due to eligibility issues. Young people's behaviour is stable but this is hindering the provision of necessary medication advice.

Young people's diversity is respected and staff support young people to express their individuality for example in relation to their sexuality. This promotes young people's sense of identity and self-confidence.

The home is having some success in developing a culture that expects young people to go to school and to wear school uniform. This has improved young people's attendance at school. The school and home staff are developing more effective communication about young people's conduct and educational goals. Homework setting is being established but the home's staff are not always providing young people with support to promote their educational potential.

The home's menu is prepared with input from young people. There is fresh fruit available for young people to eat. Young people occasionally help to prepare meals however homemade meals are not frequently produced. This may impact on young people's long-term health.

The staff are very supportive and help with ensuring family links are maintained for example ensuring that young people have the necessary transport to get home.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **adequate** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Young people are confident and demonstrate a sense of ease around each other and with staff. Young people know they can access an adult if they feel vulnerable.

All young people have individualised positive behaviour plans as well as individual incentivised behaviour targets. Sanctions are in place and are known to staff and young people. However while the impacts of actions on behaviour are discussed at team meetings they are not well recorded as part of the regular up-dating of plans. This lack of evidence hinders effective monitoring of young people's behaviour management plans.

Following the use of physical restraint young people are debriefed to ensure they feel safe. All physical restraints are discussed at team meetings so that staff can reflect on practise and to if necessary to adapt the behaviour plan. However staff do not receive individualised debrief sessions. This does not provide a good reflective culture to improve practise.

Young people are not going missing and anti-social behaviour outside of the home is not taking place. This demonstrates young people are improving their safety and well-being. A recent new admission has led to an increase in some bullying behaviours between young people. To minimise incidents staff closely supervise young people. Staff do not tolerate intimidating behaviours and address issues as they arise with young people. The manager has also asked keyworkers to discuss the issue of bullying in keyworker sessions. In addition there are plans to utilise anti-bullying board games at house meetings as a method to engage young people in meaningful discussion about bullying related issues. Staff are also successful in engaging young people in after school activities. This provides positive opportunities for young people to develop self-confidence and to promote positive behaviours.

New staff are appropriately selected and vetted to help to ensure young people are cared for by suitable people.

The home informs Ofsted and partners of notifiable events to promote partnership working and to safeguard young people. The home also investigates allegations and disclosures to protect young people from harm.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **inadequate**.

The manager does not robustly monitor and evaluate the quality of care provided to young people. Consequently the impact of some areas of practice are not evaluated impeding the manager's ability to report accurately on areas in need of improvement.

One requirement made at the last inspection is no longer relevant as young people are no longer educated in the home's premises. The manager has sought the views of parents to inform quality assurance (regulation 34) in the home however the views of placing authorities and young people are not gathered. A development plan is in place and the manager is aware of many of the weaknesses identified in this report. However the manager is not monitoring and evaluating trends and patterns of all records such as behaviour management plans and consequently evaluation is not robust.

Recommendations have been addressed and locks have been put on doors this is promoting young people's privacy. Staff have been made aware about action to take if young people are acting in a menacing way with a knife to ensure the safety of young people and staff is ensured.

The Statement of Purpose has been reviewed but it has not been submitted to Ofsted. It does not clearly outline the therapeutic services that are available to young people or the eligibility criteria and process to access such services. This hinders the ability of placing authorities and parents to know what services the home offers.

Some staff feel well supported and feel that they are part of a good team. However other staff members feel unsupported. Team meetings take place on a regular basis and appraisals are up-to-date however one-to-one supervision is not being provided to ensure staff do feel supported and able to effectively support young people.

Young people's records are not signed or dated by the author or the young person. This hinders the ability to easily identify who is responsible for entries into young people's records. Also lack of young people's signature reduces evidence that young people have had an opportunity to view their records. This hinders young people's engagement in their care.

The home's decorative state is tired. Additional funding is enabling redecoration of the outside and inside of the home to take place so that it will look more homely. The home has a grassed area of garden and a barbecue area, however the space is not fully utilised by young people reducing opportunities for young people to be engaged in positive activities in the home.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.